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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Response to Governor Jindal's Veto of SB 577 on the Louisiana Equal Pay Task Force

Baton Rouge, Louisiana – On Friday, June 8, 2012, Governor Jindal vetoed SB 577 authored by Sen. Karen Carter Peterson for the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus. This bill would have established and provided for the Louisiana Equal Pay Task Force to study and make recommendations relating to equal pay issues in Louisiana. In his message, the Governor stated SB 577 was vetoed because "...this legislation would force [the Louisiana Workforce Commission] LWC to take funds away from critical services for the disabled to fund the taskforce because the agency's only available source of State funding is for the Louisiana Rehabilitative Services (LRS) program."

"It is truly unfortunate that the Governor chose to veto this legislation. The statistics bear out a clear truth. Louisiana's gender wage gap is among the highest in the nation and this is hurting the prosperity of our State. By vetoing this modest study, the Governor is approving of the status quo instead of moving our state forward," Senator Peterson said. "To even begin to deal with this issue, it's imperative that we at least identify the root causes. Disparities like this harm our state, deprive it of potential tax revenues and insure working women throughout this state will continue to be at a disadvantage in the job marketplace through no fault of their own. We can and we must do better for the women of Louisiana."

According to the last fiscal note on the bill prepared by the Legislative Fiscal Office on June 3, 2012, "There is no anticipated direct material effect on governmental expenditures as a result of this measure [SB 577]. The bill contains a provision mandating no additional cost to the LA Workforce Commission beyond that which is already budgeted in relation to the work of the LA Equal Pay Task Force. Opportunity costs of staff time and existing resources may be incurred, but no additional explicit incremental expenditures can occur. There is no anticipated direct material effect on governmental revenues as a result of this measure."

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Members of the Women's Caucus supported and backed SB 577. The task force was to:

1. Study the extent of the wage disparities between men and women in certain public sector jobs
2. Study the factors that cause or tend to cause the wage disparities
3. Collect data which provided information on women's pay by category and
4. Develop actions to eliminate such disparities.

Social and economic indicators regarding women in Louisiana were shared with the Women's Caucus during its spring public policy retreat prior to the 2012 Regular Session. As a result, SB 577 was filed to further explore the findings shared with the women legislators based on information gleaned from the United States Census Bureau and other sources. A copy of the presentation can be downloaded from the Women's Caucus website at lwc.louisiana.gov and then click on the link "Louisiana Women--Social and Economic Indicators."

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